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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, April 25, 1944

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Subject: "NOTES ON FRESH VEGETABLES!" Information from distribution specialists of the War Food Administration.

In the spring the cook's fancy turns to fresh vegetables. And meals become a little like spring bouquets, gay and colorful.

Probably one of the first vegetables we think of in our spring meal planning is green asparagus. For the country as a whole, asparagus is at its peak of supply during the latter part of April and the first of May. Market men often refer to asparagus as "grass". And here's a point to remember...most fresh green and yellow vegetables are rich in Vitamin A, and the deeper green they are, the more Vitamin A they are likely to contain. Distribution specialist of the War Food Administration estimate about the same amount of commercial asparagus going to market throughout the country this year as last year.

Other fresh vegetables, among the first to peep through the ground, are radishes and green onions. So far this year, growing conditions for vegetables have been unusually good...especially the late winter crops of cabbage, beets and carrots. And that brings to mind that the term "spring" vegetables is probably a mis-nomer, because many of the vegetables that we commonly associate with spring, are on the market the year around. Modern transportation and the sub-tropical climate in some of our Southern States makes this possible. They are a little more plentiful, of course, at the peak of their growing season. The peak is more apparent when the production of vegetables is widespread, and the market includes both the home-grown and shipped-in supplies. It varies, too, with the weather.

To know what this season holds in store for us, let's take a look at the fresh vegetables now on the market and the prospects for the months ahead. First of all, we find that the late winter production overlaps that of early spring, providing

us with a wide selection of fresh vegetables...green, yellow, and red. For example, this past winter's production of lettuce and cabbage stands at an all time high. So we have lots of fresh, green, point-saving lettuce and cabbage on the market at this time, carrying the harvest of winter over into spring. Rutabagas, are another vegetable on the market just now that are a hold-over from winter. They are the large yellow turnips, some are purple topped and about three or four times as large as the average turnip. Rutabagas like cold weather. They grow best in our Northern States and in Canada. When Canadians speak of turnips, they mean rutabagas. And in some parts of our country, rutabagas are referred to simply as "Swedes". They have a distinctive flavor and provide good substantial fare for spring meals. Try cooking them in small balls, made with a vegetable ball cutter, and served with carrots chopped fine in a sauce, garnished with parsley.

Potatoes are a good example of a food on the market the year 'round. And just now the market includes both old and new potatoes. Many from last year's bountiful harvest are still on the market. Potatoes are not only a year-round food but an around-the-clock food, as well...good for satisfying hearty appetites at every meal. And next to bread or cereals, potatoes rank as the most important item in the diet of many peoples...one reason being that they provide more human food per acre than does any other food. When you pry into their nutritional make-up you realize, too, that the universal appeal of potatoes has a scientific background. Potatoes offer some important minerals and vitamins. Iron and vitamin C, besides that for example potatoes are a good energy food.

Beets and carrots are two other vegetables whose abundant supply puts them among the fresh vegetables first in line for your marketing list this season. Here are some production facts about them. The Texas spring beet crop is about one-fourth above last year's. This means that we have around 165 thousand more bushels to use before May 15, than we had last year. Most of these will be sold bunched, three to five beets to the bunch. This of course, gives you two vegetables in one,

but many beets, are sold without their tops to save on containers and transportation. These beets are just as tender and of as good quality as the bunched. And the carrot crop in Texas, while slightly below last year's, is way above average. The spring crop of carrots in California and Arizona likewise is large...considerably above average.

In keeping with this year's bountiful production are these no-point menu suggestions. Carrot-orange marmalade is an idea for a vitamin rich spread, whose color and flavor are ideal for spring. Cooked beets, too, when served with an egg horseradish sauce makes a dish with a peppery spring flavor. And it's an interesting way to use another food belonging to spring, one that is especially abundant this season...eggs.

Spring days, of course, are salad days at their best. That's particularly true this spring. For lettuce, one of our most popular salad greens, is plentiful in supply. Until now, most of the lettuce on the market has been of the Iceberg type. However, romaine and big Boston lettuce, a type, having a dark green leaf, will be coming on the market in greater supply around the last of April, and the first of May. Leaf lettuce will be plentiful when home grown supplies are marketed.

Shipments of spring onions from Texas are now getting under way, and onions should be fairly plentiful on the market during May. They'll consist of two varieties...the yellow Bermuda and the Crystal white wax. The smaller crystal white wax onions are especially good for creaming. About the first of May also the babosa or large sweet Spanish-type onion, like that used in hamburgers, will be coming on the market.

All in all, the high production record for many fresh vegetables makes this spring a marvellous no-point season. So be on the lookout for new ways of serving those vegetables that are most plentiful. Make your use of them equal their fine production record.

